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 RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 1341  
 RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0231  
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1454  
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0878  
 RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0864  
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 0851  
 RUQMKW/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 1224  
 RUEHLD/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0795  
 RUQMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 0903  
 RUFHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0722  
 RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0421  
 RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0234  
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1055  
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0825  
 RUQMDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN 7355  
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
 TAGS: PREL, MARR, MASS, SA, US, SY, LE, ZP, IR, IZ  
 SUBJECT: CODEL TOWER: MEETING WITH SAUDI DEFMIN SULTAN

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1. (S-ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: IN A ONE HOUR SESSION WITH SAUDI DEFMIN SULTAN, SENATOR TOWER DREW SULTAN OUT ON THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR, THE THREAT OF ITS EXPANSION, THE LEBANESE ARMY, THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT, THE SYRIAN FACTOR AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. FLEET OFF LEBANON. SULTAN'S COMMENTS ON IRAN-IRAQ, WHILE RAMBLING IN PRESENTATION, REFLECTED THE THEME WHICH HE HAS STATED (THOUGH PERHAPS DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE) IN RECENT WEEKS: THE TWO SUPER POWERS CAN AND SHOULD END THE WAR AND INTERPOSE A U.N. FORCE; SAUDI ARABIA HAS LITTLE TO FEAR FROM THE WAR, AND KEEPING THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ OPEN IS CHIEFLY A PROBLEM FOR THE WEST. ON LEBANON, HIS COMMENTS WERE MORE REFLECTIVE: THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THESE WERE HIS "PERSONAL" RECOMMENDATION THAT THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT BE DROPPED AND HIS BASICALLY POSITIVE VIEW ON THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF THE U.S. FLEET OFF LEBANESE SHORES AS OPPOSED TO THE CONTINUED PRESENCE

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OF MNF FORCES WHICH HE BELIEVES SHOULD BE REMOVED AS IMPINGING ON GOL SOVEREIGNTY. END SUMMARY.

3. SENATOR TOWER AND CONGRESSMAN JOHN MCCAIN MET WITH SAUDI MINDEF SULTAN FOR AN HOUR FEBRUARY 15. ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHARGE, CODEL MEMBERS AND NOTETAKER, SENATOR TOWER LED A QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOCUSING MAINLY ON STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING THE AREA AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS.

4. AFTER AMENITIES, SENATOR TOWER ASKED SULTAN FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR, ITS POSSIBLE OUTCOME, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SAUDI ARABIAN SECURITY. SULTAN RESPONDED THAT THE KINGDOM WAS NATURALLY AGAINST WAR AND VIOLENCE AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. THE WAR THREATENED THE INTERESTS OF EVERYONE. THE USSR WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN IRANIAN DEFEAT; THE U.S. WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN IRAQI DEFEAT. THE SAG HAD SOUGHT TO STOP THE WAR THROUGH THE UN, THE ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE AND THROUGH THIRD WORLD INTER-MEDIARIES. HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE WAR COULD BE ENDED BY "SPEECHES, HOPES OR THREATS, EVEN BY THE U.N. ALONE." IT WOULD REQUIRE ACTION BY THE SUPERPOWERS FOLLOWED BY A UNSC DECISION TO SEND A MULTINATIONAL FORCE. THE MNF WOULD BE POSITIONED BETWEEN THE IRANIANS AND THE IRAQIS IN BOTH IRAQ AND IRAN. THEN THEY COULD BE BROUGHT TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

5. RAISING THE ISSUE OF ALLEGED SAUDI ARABIAN VULNERABILITY, SULTAN SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA IS A NEIGHBOR TO BOTH IRAN AND IRAQ. "WE HAVE COMMON INTERESTS." CONTRARY TO WHAT IS SAID IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS, THE KINGDOM DID NOT CONSIDER ITSELF THREATENED BY THE WAR BECAUSE "WE HAVE NO EVIL INTENTIONS TOWARD EITHER IRAN OR IRAQ." HE SAID THAT HE FELT THE SITUATION WOULD EVENTUALLY IMPROVE, ADDING THAT THE KINGDOM WOULD NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO BE DRAGGED INTO THE WAR.

6. SENATOR TOWER ASKED SULTAN WHAT HE BELIEVED WOULD BE THE REACTION TO AN IRANIAN ATTACK IN THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ. SULTAN REPLIED THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE THE FIRST TO INTERVENE. WHILE SAUDI ARABIA COULD MANAGE TO SUSTAIN ITSELF "WITH DATES, GRAIN AND MILK", U.S. INTERESTS AND TRADE WOULD BE AFFECTED, AND THE U.S. WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DISREGARD SUCH AN ACT. CONGRESSMAN MCCAIN ASKED SULTAN IF HE THOUGHT THAT IRAN RECOGNIZED THAT THE U.S. WOULD REACT. SULTAN REPLIED THAT HAD THE IRANIANS REALIZED THE GRAVITY OF THEIR THREAT TO THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ, THEY

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WOULD NEVER HAVE ISSUED IT. "THERE IS NO RATIONALITY IN IRAN, INDEED NO STATE THERE." ALL INTERNATIONAL WATERWAYS SHOULD FALL UNDER "INTERNATIONAL MILITARY PROTECTION HE ADDED.

7. SENATOR TOWER ASKED SULTAN IF HE BELIEVED THE OIL-FIELDS WERE THREATENED BY IRAN OR BY SUBVERSION. SULTAN SAID SUBVERSION WAS UNLIKELY, BUT AN AIR OR NAVAL RAID WAS A POSSIBILITY. WHILE HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD BE DRAGGED INTO THE WAR, "IF WE ARE ATTACKED WE WILL RETALIATE IN A STRONGER MANNER THAN IRAQ HAS." SULTAN CONTINUED ON HIS FAMILIAR THEME THAT THE U.S. SHOULD PROVIDE POWERFUL AND STRONG DEFENSIVE WEAPONS. THIS WOULD SPARE THE U.S. ANXIETY OVER SAUDI ARABIA'S SAFETY AND THE U.S.'S OWN INTERESTS. IF NATIONS KNOW

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WE HAVE STRONG DEFENSES, THEY "WILL THINK A HUNDRED TIMES" BEFORE ATTACKING US."

8. TURNING TO LEBANON, SENATOR TOWER ASKED SULTAN IF THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD MAINTAIN POWER ADEQUATE TO DEAL WITH THE INTERNAL SITUATION IF THE MARINES WERE TO BE WITHDRAWN. SULTAN SAID IT COULD IF CIRCUMSTANCES IMPROVED.

9. HE SAID THAT HE "PERSONALLY BELIEVED" AN END TO THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT WAS NECESSARY. THE AGREEMENT WAS NOW GENERALLY VIEWED IN LEBANON AND THE ARAB WORLD AS AN AMERICAN AGREEMENT NOT A LEBANESE OR ISRAELI AGREEMENT. ALTHOUGH IT HAD BEEN RATIFIED BY THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT, THE AGREEMENT WAS SEEN AS IMPOSED ON BOTH ISRAEL AND LEBANON. SULTAN SAID THAT FOR THESE REASONS THE AGREEMENT SHOULD BE ABOLISHED NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT THIS MAY BE FOR THE U.S. TO ACCEPT. "ISRAEL WILL UNDERSTAND THAT PLEASING THE U.S. IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOLDING ON TO THE AGREEMENT." THE LEBANESE BELIEVE THE AGREEMENT IS PREJUDICIAL TO THEIR INTERESTS, AND GEMAYEL IS UNABLE TO BRING THINGS TO NORMAL. WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT WE COULD ALL STAND MORE STRONGLY BEHIND THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, SULTAN ASSERTED. THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO BRING ABOUT A WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES. U.N. FORCES COULD THEN RETURN TO LEBANON FOR A YEAR OR SO-- UNTIL THINGS ARE NORMAL. AS FOR THE MNF, HIS PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT IT "INFRINGES ON THE INTERESTS OF LEBANON AND ITS SOVEREIGNTY," THOUGH HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THE INTERESTS OF MNF PARTICIPANTS.

10. SULTAN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WAS POSSIBLE IN LEBANON DESPITE SYRIA. NO LEBANESE WANT SYRIAN DOMINATION, EVEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT SYRIA AT THIS TIME. THROUGHOUT THEIR HISTORY, THE LEBANESE HAVE NEVER CONTEMPLATED ACCEPTING SYRIAN DOMINATION OR CONTROL. GOING BACK TO THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT, SULTAN SAID THAT "THINGS WOULD IMPROVE" ONCE IT WAS GONE. (PRESUMABLY IN SYRIAN READINESS TO COOPERATE.) HE DID NOT BELIEVE ARGUMENTS THAT SYRIA WAS ABLE TO SWALLOW UP LEBANON. "THEY (SYRIA) HAVE TOO MANY ECONOMIC AND OTHER PROBLEMS." THE ISRAELIS, BECAUSE OF "BEGIN'S RECKLESS INVASION", HAD PUSHED LEBANON INTO SYRIA'S LAP.

11. SENATOR TOWER ASKED SULTAN IF HE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR LEBANON TO HAVE A MULTI-CONFESSIONAL, EFFECTIVE ARMY. SULTAN REPLIED THAT IT COULD BE DONE BUT THAT IT COULD NOT INCLUDE ALL OF THE DENOMINATIONS AT THIS TIME. "SOME NEED TIME TO SETTLE DOWN AND GET RID OF THEIR MUTINOUS TENDENCIES AND CHILDISH AMBITIONS." HE BELIEVED THAT IF LEBANESE OFFICERS WERE GIVEN THE

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OPPORTUNITY TO REORGANIZE, LEBANON COULD HAVE A STANDING FORCE OF 50,000 MEN WITHIN ONE TO TWO YEARS. NOTING SULTAN'S PREDICTION THAT IT WILL TAKE TWO YEARS TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE LEBANESE ARMY, SENATOR TOWER ASKED IF ALL MILITIAS WERE DISBANDED FOLLOWING GEMAYEL'S PLAN WHAT KIND OF POWER VACUUM WOULD BE CREATED. SULTAN REPLIED THAT U.N. FORCES, ACTING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF U.N. RESOLUTIONS, WOULD BE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN SECURITY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE LEBANESE ARMY. WHILE HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES WERE INTACT, HE FELT THAT A U.N. FORCE WAS THE ONLY SOLUTION. HE ADDED THAT GEMAYEL'S PLAN WAS GOOD BUT THAT FIRST A NE

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NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE NEEDED ALONG WITH PARLIAMEN-  
TARY ELECTIONS AND THE U.N. FORCE TO MAKE THE IDEA WORK.  
THE MILITIAS WOULD NEED TO BE DISMANTLED GRADUALLY. THE  
PHALANGE WOULD NEVER ACCEPT THE PLAN IF THE DRUZE AND  
OTHERS WERE STILL ARMED AND NOT BEING DISMANTLED ALSO.  
SYRIA AND ISRAEL WOULD NOT ACCEPT IT EITHER.

12. TURNING TO THE AMERICAN FLEET, SULTAN SAID HE  
SUPPORTED THE PRESENCE OF THE FLEET FOR THE SAKE OF  
LEBANON'S SECURITY AND THE AREA'S STABILITY AND DID NOT  
BELIEVE IT INFRINGED ON LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY. ONLY  
WHEN PRESSED BY A DIRECT QUESTION, DID HE SAY HE DID NOT  
SUPPORT ITS FIRING ON TARGETS IN LEBANON. BUT WHEN ASKED  
IF THIS INCLUDED SUPPRESSION OF FIRE AGAINST LEBANESE  
CIVILIANS, SULTAN REPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR  
HIM TO SECOND-GUESS A COMMANDER IN THE FIELD WHO MUST  
MAKE THE DECISIONS. HOWEVER, THE U.S. SHOULD CONCENTRATE  
ON GETTING TO THE SOURCES OF THE PROBLEM. IT SHOULD TAKE  
STOCK OF THE EXTENT OF ITS ACTIONS OVER THE PAST 15 DAYS,  
AND SEE IF THEY HAVE LED TO SOLUTIONS. IF THEY HAVE NOT,  
THEN THE TIME HAS COME TO TRY A DIFFERENT APPROACH.

13. KUWAIT/BEIRUT: MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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END OF MESSAGE

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